

Pat Kroell Home Destroyed by Fire

**With Adequate Fire Fighting
Equipment Damage Could Have
Been Minimal**

The beautiful home of Mr. Pat J. Kroell on North Highlands, was destroyed by fire Tuesday night about nine o'clock. Nothing is known about how the fire started. It was discovered by neighbors. None of the occupants of the house were at home.

When first discovered the blaze was confined to the kitchen and dining room. If water and fire fighting equipment had been adequate and available, the fire could have been brought under control, preventing the complete destruction of the building.

Much of the contents of the

By W. M. "Mack" Wyatt, Editor

home was removed when it became apparent that the fire could not be stopped.

It was a serious threat to nearby residences, particularly those of Joe Klotzman and Dr. M. L. Orr. These were saved by valiant efforts of volunteer fire fighters.

The Kroell home was a large and beautiful brick structure.

For more than an hour the flames raged in their undisturbed fury as one room after another yielded until the whole building was reduced to ruin.

Great crowds of people stood by in helplessness and witnessed the catastrophe, and thus saw another great loss that could have been minimized if we had had a water supply available and proper appliances with which to use it.

WE ARE HELPLESS

The bare, empty and seared brick walls of what was yesterday one of Montevallo's finest homes, stand today a grim monument to our lack of adequate fire protection. It is a sickening reality.

What happened to the Pat Kroell house on Tuesday night is but a likeness of the same thing that might happen to any of our homes or places of business at any time – and we would be totally helpless to prevent it or even to minimize its intensity.

Montevallo deserves better than it has in fire protection facilities. We can have better, if we will. Until we do have better our property is not safe.

It is menaced every hour of the day and night. We pay heavy penalties for our negligence and apparent unconcern.

The fire Tuesday night certainly is convincing to all of us. What will we do about it?

Other homes will go the same way unless steps are taken to furnish the town with facilities necessary to prevent it. The challenge is not transferable to the other fellow. It is to me and to you and to everyone.

The money that was lost in this one fire Tuesday night would buy for our town a system of defense against fires that would make it impossible for such a thing to happen.

Editor's Note:

The Kroell home that was destroyed by fire in 1936 was located at the corner of Highland and Moody streets, three blocks east of the Alabama College east gate. Following the fire, the lot was donated by the Kroell family to the Catholic Church. St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church was constructed on the site in 1951. The church re-located to a 20 acre campus on highway 119 between Montevallo and Alabaster in 1991. The building on Highland Street continues to serve as a Catholic student center today.

A Statement From Mayor Acker About Fire Protection Facilities

For our editorial comment of last week about Montevallo's need of fire protection facilities the Times has received the hearty approval of many town people. Thus we are strengthened in our opinion that the community's need in this respect is generally recognized.

Most impressive of the responses received is a written statement from Mayor Chas. T. Acker. We print it in full because it is a discussion of the subject which contains thought and facts that our people should have in mind.

Our approach to betterment in fire protection must be made

through our town government. It must be actuated by the sentiment of our people and their determination to do something about a thing which we all feel should be done without delay.

Our town officials must not be expected to do it alone. They can not do it alone, much as they would like to do it.

We are happy to note that the Mayor and Council are ready to lead in the matter and only the willingness of our people to unite in following them is necessary to start.

It is of no use for us merely to agree that we are in a bad fix.

We must determine and agree

that we will do something to remedy a bad situation.

We need one particular thing. That is agreed. We must pay for it if we are to have it. That is a fact.

Let us see what it will cost. Then let us see how we may provide the cost.

The Times lays down this proposition:

In the long run, it will not involve any extra cost for Montevallo to have adequate fire protection facilities.

Get your pencil and a piece of paper and see if you can figure that out. (It will not take a piece of paper bigger than a postage stamp.)

MAYOR'S STATEMENT

"The Mayor of Montevallo, personally, and in behalf of the Town Council wishes to thank the editor of The Times for the editorial dealing with the loss by fire of the beautiful Kroell home last week.

"Such a catastrophe is a headache and a heartache to every citizen who takes pride in his town. When we realize that it could and should have been prevented, the Mayor feels that immediate and wholehearted cooperation between property owners and the Town Council should result.

"Practically every source of

present revenue being pledged to the payment of previously incurred debts, the city property tax being half of that of Shelby County's other incorporated towns, and that our constitutional limit for bond issues is practically exhausted, some additional source of revenue should be provided. These matters have been brought to the attention of our citizens by talks before our civic bodies and by published statements from time to time for several years.

"With all the above-mentioned handicaps the Council

has, for several months, been working out plans for some additional fire plugs. I think I am safe in promising at least some measure of relief within a short time.

"Should our revenues drop below the present level, or the legislature make any changes in gasoline taxation, we will again have to appeal for small additional local tax or other source of revenue, to not only provide needed fire protection, but for operating expenses, refinanced bond issues and interest payments which constitute our town's present financial load."